



Tulare County Parks Advisory Committee

**Committee
Members**
Mike Chrisman
Carol Finney
Karol Aure-Flynn
Nancy Hawkins
Neil Pilegard
Courtney Roche, Jr.

MINUTES

April 21, 2016

03:00 P.M. Committee Convenes

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

At this time, members of the public may comment on any item not appearing on the agenda. Under state law, matters presented under this item cannot be discussed or acted upon by the Board at this time. For items appearing on the agenda, the public is invited to make comments at the time the item comes up for Board consideration. Any person addressing the Board will be limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes so that all interested parties have an opportunity to speak. At all times, please use the microphone and state your name and address for the record.

Present Members: Mike Chrisman, Carol Finney, Nancy Hawkins, Neil Pilegard, Courtney Roche Jr.

Absent Members: Karol Aure-Flynn

Staff Present: John Hess, Amy King, Brooke Sisk, Victor Calderon

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Chairman Chrisman.
2. **Welcome:** Chairman Chrisman welcomed everyone in attendance.
3. **Approval of Minutes:** Committee member Pilegard made a motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting as submitted and committee member Hawkins seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.
4. **Public Comment:** Kevin Caskey, a member of the public, informed the committee that a project has been underway at the Tulare County museum in preparation for the Main Street Jamboree. Chairman Chrisman asked for more information and Mr. Caskey appointed Amy King to speak to the project. Miss King reported that there will be an event at the museum on Sunday from 10-3 in celebration of the re-opening of the Main Street exhibit. The exhibit has been

completely dismantled and cleaned, painted, new pictures added, the Cadillac back on display along with the restored gas pump. The event is family friendly and there will be train rides, food available, guests can make something on a hand crank sewing machine, and a blacksmith demonstration.

Mr. Caskey reported that he was able to view the exhibit earlier in the day and Amy King has done a really nice job putting it together.

Committee member Hawkins asked if people are unable to make it on Sunday, will the exhibit be available for viewing at a later date.

Amy King stated that the exhibit is available for viewing during regular museum hours.

John Hess asked how many people are expected to attend. Amy King shared that the event has been advertised on the radio and in the newspaper several times. It will be on the front page of the Visalia Times Delta the following day as well as on many community calendars. She is hoping for a good turnout, but there is not an estimate at this time.

John Hess reported that Catherine Doe, from the Valley Voice, is unable to attend today's meeting.

5. Ledbetter Park Background Information: Committee member Pilegard reported Ledbetter Park was donated to the County by Lee and Hazel Ledbetter in 1971. It is an eleven acre park, a central meeting point for Cutler and Orosi and sees a lot of use considering the smaller size. In 2011 the local community, spearheaded by former school superintendent Pat Murphy, raised funds to build a skate park. The total project cost \$100,000 and included matching funds from the County. Currently the park is under construction as the irrigation system is being updated. The project was bid at approximately \$364,000. The Housing Related Parks Program grant will cover approximately \$200,000 and the remaining costs will come from CountyCapital Project funding. The old irrigation system was installed in the mid-1980s and is well past its serviceable lifespan. The well in the park was replaced in 2003 and is still in good condition. The well is located directly behind the stage almost to the property line. Only two County parks have water supplied by public utility districts. Ledbetter Park is one and Woodville Park is the other. However, irrigation water is supplied by the park wells, and not public utility. The new irrigation system that is being installed is a baseline clock, which is connected to a web-based system. The system learns the flow and if there is a discrepancy, an email will be sent to inform committee member Pilegard of a possible break, leak, etc. It will also have a moisture sensor that allows the upper and lower parameters to be set. This higher efficiency allows for watering to be done only when needed, allowing for the saving of more water.

In 2007, the fire engine playground was installed by children along with firefighters in uniform to memorialize the 9/11 tragedy. It was the first one to be installed on the west coast.. This playground sees a huge amount of use.

The domestic water infrastructure and electrical infrastructure need to be replaced as well as the rebuilding of of arbors and replacement of the older playground. It is estimated that the County will qualify for approximately \$600,000 for these projects through the Housing Related Parks

Program. Ledbetter Park is the only Tulare County Park that qualifies for funding through this program.

Committee member Roche asked about the status of the restrooms.

Committee member Pilegard stated that they were not renovated in conjunction with recent upgrades at other parks because they already had sufficient infrastructure. However, there are plans to upgrade them in the future so that replacement parts are consistent throughout the parks.

Chairman Chrisman inquired as to how Ledbetter Park is connected to the community, and how to connect with the people using the park to make sure their needs are being met.

Committee member Pilegard stated the Lyons club, a Veterans group, churches and Cutler – Orosi Latin American club are very involved. They use the park and invest in it. For example, these groups built the stage and the backstop for the baseball field. Each year four to six very large community events are held at Ledbetter Park, and during the summer, the soccer field is used every day..

6. Visalia Feral Cat Coalition Trap, Neuter, and Release – Follow Up: John Hess reported that the item is scheduled to go before the Board of Supervisors on May 10. At the previous meeting the report was received by the committee and at this meeting a motion to accept a recommendation is needed as an action item to move forward with the recommendation. Mooney Grove Park has a variety of wildlife and one of those species is feral cats. The Visalia Feral Cat Coalition has proposed to use the Trap, Neuter, and Return program. The County worked with the Visalia Feral Cat Coalition to complete a proposal to take to the Board of Supervisors. The proposal includes that there will be a twelve month pilot program to gather data and determine whether the program is effective for long term implementation. Committee member Hawkins motioned to accept report as support for recommendation and Committee member Pilegard seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously by the committee.

7. Park Well Status Report: Committee member Pilegard reported that the good news is that the well at Mooney Grove Park has power connected and is fully operational. The well is a 100 horsepower turban well for irrigation and is set at 1000 gallons per minute. Mineralogical test for domestic was taken and passed. The bacteriological test failed by 0.1. The second test passed Tuesday and the one conducted today is expected to pass. At the beginning of next week the information will be sent to the State everything will be online.

Chairman Chrisman stated that because it is a public park it needs to be licensed by the State.

Committee member Pilegard confirmed the domestic system only, not irrigation.

Chairman Chrisman stated that Cameron Creek was releasing water and asked if water was being stored in the basin on the east end of Mooney Grove Park.

Committee member Pilegard confirmed the basin is full now and the water was sold at a reduced rate for \$25/acre foot. Cameron Creek will shut down the water tomorrow.

Chairman Chrisman asked who uses that water.

Committee member Pilegard stated Tulare Irrigation District.

John Hess stated that on May 3 the notice of completion of the project will be taken to the Board of Supervisors.

Committee member Pilegard informed the committee that there is still no irrigation well for Cutler Park.

Chairman Chrisman asked why there is still no new irrigation well for Cutler Park.

Committee member Pilegard responded that there is no money available in the budget.

Committee member Roche asked if water could be pumped from the river to the park.

Committee member Pilegard replied that the topography of the park does not allow for flood irrigation.

8. Mooney Grove 20 Year Conceptual Master Plan – Implementation Strategy: Please refer to Agenda Item #8 for further information.

John Hess suggested having a working session in July to go through the plan and look through justifications and then establish priorities during a meeting in October. Then in January an actual strategy document could be produced with implementation recommendations.

Chairman Chrisman stated that during the adoption of this plan there were sessions for community input. It would be helpful to know who the constituencies were that were engaged in the process. It is important to have public work sessions.

John Hess reported that the plan was broken into two parts. The first part focused on the AG museum and the second part addressed the park. There were two public meetings to solicit ideas and feedback. Then it was taken to the Board of Supervisors where it was adopted and certified as a vision. A few months later the Parks Advisory Committee was formed and the Board of Supervisors made it clear the plan would be a priority of the Committee.

Chairman Chrisman stated that if the Committee is going to make some recommendations and prioritize items, the Committee needs to know what general fund dollars are available as well as grant funding, so the outcome will be realistic.

John Hess reported that this was discussed internally and a strategy is needed to address sequential priorities notwithstanding funding availability. Kleinfelder, the consultant that developed the plan, provided cost estimates that can help determine budgetary constraints.

Committee member Hawkins pointed out that there is so much to be done before starting anything new. She is wondering if these initial items such as the well that is needed are included in the plan. She stressed that it would be hard to prioritize because the plan is difficult to understand.

Chairman Chrisman stated that these are things that we need to address in the priorities and can be included in their recommendation.

John Hess reminded the committee that the plan is a visionary plan with no maintenance discussion included.

Committee member Pilegard stated that the plan doesn't address maintenance but it does address utilities in the plan. The necessary infrastructure must be complete before working on things like the Veterans Memorial.

John Hess stated that the Master Plan needs to be proceeded with and the committee can capture both the maintenance needs as well as the long term vision in one document.

Chairman Chrisman states that engaging the public in the process is important. We need to be a filter for the Board of Supervisors and make some choices.

John Hess reported that The Real Mooney Grove Project was previously very active, however, there have been some transpirations in personal lives that have changed their intentions.

Chairman Chrisman stated that the committee needs to reach out to the people that attended these meetings and make sure that they are included. It will be helpful to know the specific needs that they are articulating.

Committee member Finney stated that people are very impressed with feedback about the park and the support that the community has for Mooney Grove Park.

Committee member Pilegard stated that Brad Wilson, a member of the public, was very involved in Friends of Mooney Grove. He had discussions with staff and decided not to be part of that group and became very supportive of the Master Plan. He liked some ideas that were not included in the plan, but would like to see these things implemented.

John Hess stated that staff recommends a completion schedule for the implementation strategy to go forward.

Committee member Pilegard asked if the public needs to be included in the July meeting or October meeting.

Chairman Chrisman responded that the stage needs to be set in July and get input on process and feedback on preliminary plan.

John Rodgers, a member of the public, requested to share thoughts at this point in the meeting. He distributed a list of comments and concerns, on behalf of a group of approximately 14 park advocates. This is entered as Exhibit A. He stated that the idea of the Parks Advisory Committee is to point out problems in the park to the Board of Supervisors. He still thinks there are a lot of things, large and small, to be done at the park before we proceed with the master plan. He feels strongly that we need more money from the Board of Supervisors. It was nice of the Board of Supervisors to give \$1 million for all ten parks but that is not enough. The whole concept of the plan could change. He can't support the plan with the needed maintenance to existing structures. It is important to have the resources to maintain the structures that are there and any new ones that may be added. His group is not affiliated with the Real Mooney Grove Project group. The group is opposed to tearing down structures in the park, particularly the concession stand He

would like to see green healthy oak trees and not be so focused on the attractions. The Board of Supervisors needs to allocate more money and staff to the park.

Community member Finney asked what the speed limit on Mooney in front of the park was long ago.

John Hess stated that it was pointed out in the plan that it took 45 minutes from downtown Visalia to Mooney Grove Park in a horse and carriage. As a result, families would spend the entire day at the park and demand for amenities was much higher. It was brought up that we need to look to the future and see what will be needed in the future.

Chairman Chrisman stated that the committee needs to keep a sustained effort going for support of the park improvements. The committee needs to make sure that the park has support and it is realistic to make long term improvements.

Kevin Caskey, a member of the public, stated that a lot of the things happening in the museum are sponsored by the historical society. There is always room for more activities. Things are positive out there and we need people to attend events.

Chairman Chrisman stated that the committee needs a specific set of asks and public support to successfully obtain more funding from the Board of Supervisors. In preparation for the next meeting, he asked the members to review the Master Plan and drive around the Park.

Chairman Chrisman informed the committee that a vote is needed to proceed with staff recommendation to set forth a schedule to continue working on the plan at quarterly meetings. Committee member Finney made a motion and Committee member Roche seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

9: Committee Member Matters: John Hess informed the committee that the Board of Supervisors did a recruitment to fill the vacancy of Aaron Gomes. Additionally, Karol Aure-Flynn has indicated that she has difficulty making the meetings. John Hess will reach out to see if she is still interested in being on the committee. Each Supervisor selects a member for the committee and not necessarily from their district.

Chairman Chrisman suggested that each of the Parks Advisory Committee members should make a recommendation to staff for some people that might want to serve on the committee.

10. Next Meeting Date: The committee confirmed that they are comfortable with going to meeting quarterly rather than monthly. John Hess and Amy King will email everyone in approximately a month to see about possible dates for the next meeting to be held.

11. Parks Manager Update & Ledbetter Park Tour:

Chairman Chrisman asked if there was an estimated date of when the well at Cutler Park would be installed. Committee member Pilegard said that he has submitted the request. John Hess elaborated saying that it will be a question of budget. They see it as important because you can't run a park without water, but the expense does need to be discussed. The estimated cost is between \$300,000 and \$400,000.

Committee member Hawkins asked if Committee member Pilegard has ever thought about raising the fee to the park.

Committee member Pilegard said approximately 20% of the parks revenue is through fees, however, he is concerned that if there is an increase in fees, it would price out those who need and use the parks the most. The County has increased the cost of sound permits and arbor rentals every three to four years and is considering increasing the nightly fee for campsites at Balch Park, which is currently \$16.00

12. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 4:18 p.m.

Exhibit A

Park Meeting – April 21, 2016

- The park is looking better.
- It's nice to see the green grass.
- There appears to be adequate water.
- The irrigation system appears to be working properly.
- Unfortunately, there are many trees that are dying or on the verge of dying.
- My little group and I are very grateful to this commission for the time and effort they have put in and it is good to know that those efforts are beginning to show some results.
- While the lake is showing some improvement, it appears that there is still much to do as far as cleaning debris and moss and the general state of disrepair.
- It's reported that from this meeting on, the purpose of this commission is going to be the institution of the 20 year plan. We still believe that it is premature to start instituting the 20 year plan until the park is fully rehabilitated. While we believe it is better, it is still a long way to being up to the standards we would hope.
- There are many things in the 20 year plan that we would not oppose. However, until we see evidence that the park leadership is willing to continue the standard of the care and maintenance it has shown in the last 3 months, we would ask that institution of any part of the 20 year plan with the exception of the lagoon be put off until some time in the future.
- One of the items in the 20 year plan is for a cobblestone walkway around the perimeter of the lake, this is one thing that definitely needs to be done and my group would be behind this 100%.
- The 20 year plan calls for the destruction of the rock fish pond and the demolition of the old concession stand. If this is still part of the plan, we would be strongly opposed. We would also oppose the destruction of the wing of the 67 year old library simply because the roof leaks. The roof should be repaired.
- We would support the construction of the proposed Main Street but only if we have assurances that the old buildings will be properly maintained when they are in place. We strongly believe that the park over the years has been grossly underfunded and that this commission and the park leadership needs to take that message to the Board of Supervisors. We would hope that they would provide enough funds and that park personnel would be increased enough to maintain the park at an acceptable level.
- We do thank the Board of Supervisors for the \$1,000,000 that was bestowed upon the park system, however, we do believe that this is only a good beginning and should not be looked upon as a final solution. More money is going to have to be budgeted by the Board of Supervisors if we are to prevent Mooney Grove from falling into another state of embarrassing disrepair.